

ISSUE 3

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THE EDITOR'S PROLOGUE

Issue 3, and, by popular request, I am increasing the proportion of text and articles. This is not at the expense of display advertising, which I expect to stay at about its current level. I hope you will be in favour of this change.

I have taken several readers' suggestions to heart, one of which was to put the small advertisements into a separate section in the middle of the magazine. Now if you want to throw away the magazine and keep the small ads this will be easier to do! This was the way I intended to do it from the outset, but lack of ads led me to use them as space-filers in the first two issues. Please let me know if you think I could improve the layout of 8BIT MART further.

All the changes required my relaying virtually the whole edition and that is partly why this issue is late. Also, while I appreciate your phone calls very much, it is actually easier for me to organise my time (including time devoted to compiling the magazine) if the enquiries and contributions come by post. I did exasperate things myself by having an 'elastic' copy date but I hope results justify it.



The small art clips spread around on this front page are from the DGC Software collection for the PCW. They were supplied in .MDA format, on a PCW 3" disc, with a CONVERT file to turn them into an .SPC file for the PCW version of Stop Press, if required.

When I saw them advertised, I wondered if I could (a) read them, then (b) convert them, to run on my CPC. If so, it would show that the enormous resource of files available in this format was open to another computer. As you see, it worked and it's very easy to do.

Thanks to Campursoft's Peter Campbell of for his help with my problem. I'll give you the story next time and, as there are other programs available to do this cross-format stuff, I'll try to cover them too.

Oh, by the way, I'm sorry the best buy under £50 and £100 feature didn't make this issue - I'm afraid I ran out of space. I'll run it next time.



Now what to do for Valentine's Day? I'll take special announcements, if you like, and see if I can get some 'special interest' seasonal articles together from those of you who have kindly offered contributions.

The next copy date for 8BIT MART will be 15th January 1995 (no later!), and the next 8BIT MART will be sent out on the first of February. I'll try to be as punctual as the first 2 issues. Very Happy Christmas, all!

Brian Watson

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NINTENDO, GAME GEAR, ATARI, AMIGA,
PC, C64..

(Only SAM Coupe and SPECTRUM Users need apply)

For over 5 years, ZAT has covered all the varied aspects of the SAM Coupe and Spectrum scene, and is, like all other SAM and Spectrum zines, continuing the work where Your Sinclair, Crash, and Spectrum User left off. ZAT predominantly gives coverage to the smaller independent software services and programmers.

In each issue, you'll find sections devoted to Arcade and Adventure Games, Utilities, News, Topical Comment, Reader Input, Public Domain, and ONE TO ONE; ZAT's Question and Answer service where ZAT readers get the opportunity to pass on helpful hints and tips on anything of all to fellow users whether they be in the UK or on the other-side of the world. Plus there's loads of articles, interviews, programming tutorials and more besides!

ZAT costs £1.50 PER ISSUE, or to subscribe costs £8.50 for U.K. USERS or £9.50 FOR OVERSEAS USERS. Alternatively you can buy 3 issues for £4.00. OVERSEAS USERS PLEASE ADD £1.00. ALL BACK ISSUES are printed on Request Basis Only. All issues are available (except issue 18) and cost £1.50 each. Please add an additional 19p/25p per every 3 issues ordered to cover postage.

XTRA NEWS! XTRA NEWS! XTRA NEWS!

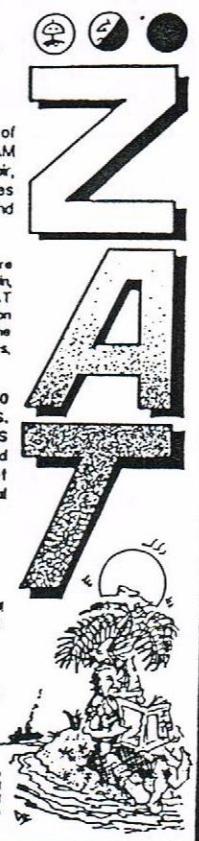
To celebrate ZAT's 5TH BIRTHDAY, We can offer all users the following offers: 1) SUBSCRIBE NOW FOR 1 YEAR FOR A MERE £6.00!
2) AVAILABLE SOON, a special limited edition run of ZAT 1, which has been out of print for 5 years. Available for £1.00 (includes postage).

Both offers end as of 31st OCTOBER, 1994.

Make all CHEQUES, POSTAL ORDERS, EUROCHEQUEs (Please DO NOT SEND CASH) payable to ZAT C/O D. BLACKBURN and send to:

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SHROPSHIRE, TF4 2LQ, United Kingdom

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Romantic Robot

It's bad news/good news for Spectrum and CPC users from Romantic Robot. The bad news is that he has very low stocks of Multifaces and other tape-to-disc/investigation items. I have used a Multiface since I got my computer and it is a wonderful thing for program poking. Good news, however, is that he is prepared to make the remainder stock available at very reduced prices to readers of 8BIT MART.

There are only about 100 Multiface 128s left and when they're gone that's it! These are for 48k, and 128k grey, Spectrums, and 128k original black Spectrums (Note: they are not suitable for +3s or 2As or 2Bs). Romantic Robot are prepared to sell these for £19.95 each, and for just another £5 you can have one of the last 30 Lifeguards or Genies. There are 3 Multiface 3s left (for +3 or Black Spectrums), and one Multiface 1 (including joystick port, for any 48k Spectrum). There are just 2 Multiprints left, and 'some' Insiders; this add-on to a Multiface needs a disc drive to work. For any of these, phone Romantic Robot first to check the price and stock.

8BIT MART SPECIAL OFFER: the first 12 readers who order a Multiface 128 will get a free Lifeguard *but only if you claim it when ordering and you quote 8BIT MART.*

Multiface 2 for CPCs are going down fast as repeatedly mentioned in the press, so again get one before they're all gone. The Multiface 2+ for the CPC Plus computers are out of stock but he is happy to make them to order, so get in quickly while that offer is open if you have a CPC Plus. Both Multifaces for CPCs cost £39.95. All the above was copied down over the phone so if in doubt, give them a call at 081 200 8870. Their address is 54, Deanscroft Avenue, LONDON NW9 8EN.

WATCH THIS SPACE!

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PICK UP A USED SNIP FROM OXFAM:.....

Sinclair 128k ZX SPECTRUM +2 (with built-in tape drive) - £20
(a choice of 2)

Sinclair 128k ZX SPECTRUM +3 (with built-in disc drive) - £22
(no power supply)

Buyer must purchase and collect from:

OXFAM SHOP, 13, High Street, ESHER,
Surrey, KT10 9RL
(0372 469808)

or

If collection is a problem phone:
Brian Watson on 0353 777006

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IEBA

I am obliged to Darren Blackburn for details of the latest developments from IEBA, The International Eight Bit Association. The group recently had a get-together at Gloucester, and the following is some of the 'fall-out'

As the Association is currently of 90% Sam and Spectrum users, and 5% C64 users (with the remaining 5% being others, there is a chance the name may be changed to reflect this. Also there was a suggestion that the information service aspect should be increased. The newsletter is being reorganised and will be quarterly during 1995.

The following benefits of IEBA membership are announced: Phoenix Software will supply their Sam Midi sequencer for just £20, Lynsoft give 10% off photocopying, if you buy 1 PD title from ZODIAC you will get a free copy of ZODIAC (*what's that?-ed*), CHIC will give 10% off to IEBA members joining a special interest group.

The next IEBA meeting will be held in Gloucester sometime in April 1995. I'll keep you informed. For further details of IEBA write to Darren Blackburn at 33, Dawley Bank, TELFORD, Shropshire TF4 2LQ.

CHIC:

the very best 8 bit computer user group offering contacts, news, reviews, PD Software and exclusive special offers to owners of Spectrum, Amstrad CPC, C64 and PCW machines.

For free information pack send an SAE to CHIC (8M), Box 121, Gerrards Cross, Bucks SL9 9JP (01753 884473)

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Spectrum Software Collectors Guide : Definitive 48 page booklet/catalogue of the best Spectrum games 1982 - 1988 : Over 100 games reviewed : Just £1.95 (Contributors wanted for 2nd edition!!).

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Cheetah Speedrum : Superb drum Sequencer : was £25 now only £14.95.

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Over 30 on Tape Poke Routines : £3.99

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(ET)**, P.O. Box 121, Gerrards
Cross, Bucks, SL9 9JP
(01753) 884473

This is the first in a series on the 8-bit computers, and is intended to be the kind of introduction to a computer that would be useful to someone who has just bought one second-hand and needs a brief summary of its best applications. If it also encourages interest in a computer you haven't currently got, that's fine too!

Amstrad's CPC series of computers come in five versions - all with either a mono or colour monitor. In order of introduction they are 464, 664, 6128, 464 Plus and 6128 Plus. In each case the first number refers to the software loading system supplied - an initial '4' indicates tape loading and '6' is used for those with a 3" disc drive. 3" discs are still available, but getting scarcer (see elsewhere in this 8BIT MART.) Adding a tape drive to a disc machine (and vice versa) is quite straightforward, though some minor surgery is required on a Plus CPC, or you can have one converted commercially. A 3½" drive is probably the best option for use as a 2nd disc drive, with a program to enable you to store up to 800k per disc.

The '64' or '128' refers to the supplied RAM memory size. In use, the available memory is slightly less than that stated, but if you regard it as an approximate guide you won't go far wrong. Most games and other programs work happily with the smaller memory, but for 'serious' use the 128k size allows the use of some very sophisticated software. You can expand past 128k but I find there is little point.

The 'Plus' suffix indicates software can also be loaded from cartridge; only a slight benefit. There is stereo sound and this, and the colour handling facilities, are much enhanced on the Plus series. There is an 8-bit, rather than the original's 7-bit, printer port as standard. Virtually any Epson-compatible printer will work with any version, including 24 pins, daisy-wheels and inkjets. Expansion sockets are more 'industry-standard' on the Plus versions, and a simple adaptor can be used to connect most peripherals made for the earlier machines. You may also come across a GX4000, a games console version of the two Plus models which requires a separate monitor. It is not a CPC in any real sense and has limited application.

Together with its supplied BASIC and CP/M (both simple but very effective), where all the CPC series really comes into its own is in its potential for expansion. For games, one can easily run two joysticks and/or a light gun and there are several game-freezers which can be used to poke extra lives and so on. For more serious use, a scanner and mouse will help in art and design work, and a silicon disc provides the virtual drive familiar to PCW users in their drive M. Serial connections can be made to modems or other computers, and every so often there are rumours of a hard disc!

A particular feature is the use of ROM boards to attach plug-in programs. This instant-loading facility will be familiar to users of consoles or other cartridge systems, but has the advantage that the programs can remain connected when not in use. For example, after switching on the computer two keystrokes can load one of a couple of fully-featured word processors, a comms package, a utility suite, or a music writing program. On the way, the software to recognise the large-format discs can have been loaded automatically and a Desktop screen loaded. For further details drop me a line at 8BIT MART.

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PD FUN. Games, Demos, Slide Shows, Adventures, for the AMSTRAD CPC. 50p per selection. Write now and get every other selection you order at half price. 3" and 3½" discs supported. Send SSAE to PD Fun, *Folly Farm*, Cold Ashton, CHIPPENHAM, Wilts. SN14 8JR.

CPC software (all on tape) - £1 each:
Special Action, Nightbreed, Cisco Heat, Paper Boy 2, Boulder Dash, Action Pack. All games boxed with instructions. Mark Johnson, 13, Ashway, Corringham, Stanford-le-Hope, Essex SS17 9EB

INSTANT RECALL - LocoMail as you've never seen it before. Fun, and easy to use!



INSTANT RECALL is a set of exceptional utilities for Amstrad PCW machines running LocoScript and LocoMail. It features a sophisticated Calculator, with a memory store/recall facility; Metric Converters; full-year Calendars, showing every UK bank holiday right through to the year 2000, plus a useful Accounts Package that keeps track of your bank balance. And all to a standard of screen presentation which you wouldn't normally associate with LocoMail.

The routines work with LocoScript/LocoMail versions 1, 2 & 3 - just state 3" or 3½" disc size and send a cheque for £9.50 to:-

David Landers
Brinkburn Garden Cottage
Long Framlington
Morpeth NE65 8AR
Or send an SAE (19p) for further details.

Attention All PCW Users!

Q. Are you hoarding software for the Amstrad PCW/PcW and which you no longer require?

Q. Are you looking to acquire a particular piece of software for your PCW?

Q. Does the cost of placing an advertisement in the national PCW magazines put you off?

If the answer to any of these questions is "Yes", then the PCW "Software-Link" database may be able to help you.

PCW "Software-Link" was conceived a year ago when it became clear that thousands of PCW users had odd pieces of software they no longer required, and many hundreds of users looking for a variety of software, especially those which are no longer in production. What was needed was a method of putting buyers and sellers touch with one another, hence PCW "Software-Link" was born, and has now assisted hundreds of PCW users.

Currently, there are some 250 individual pieces of PCW software registered on the database as being available for sale or exchange (including games, spreadsheets, word processing and utilities etc.), plus in the region of 100 separate pieces of software sought by a number of users.

To access the database for sales or purchases, there is a one-off (minimal) fee for a three month period. To obtain full details of how the service operates, and how it may assist you, simply send a large SAE to:

The Database Manager, PCW "Software-Link", Dept 8,
19, Portfield Close, BEXHILL-ON-SEA, East Sussex, TN40 2ER.

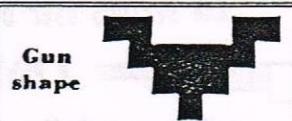
PCW "Software-Link" is run as a service to PCW users on an entirely voluntary, non-profit-making basis.

J.M. SOFTWARE GAMES

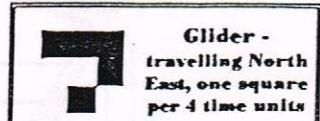
3 PARKSIDE, WESTHILL, SKENE,
ABERDEENSHIRE, AB32 6QL
TEL: 0224 741305

LIFE 1 50p (size 36k): "You place square blocks (called 'cells') on the playing area, and, according to certain rules, these cells reproduce or die according to how many neighbours they have. Particular patterns of cells have various unique behaviours, often seeming to take on a 'life' of their own. Just like the real universe, the Life universe has its own laws and properties, which have astonished computer buffs for generations. You're presented with a menu of interesting Life patterns, which you can place where you want to," July 1992 PCW Plus.

LIFE2 £2.50 (size 26k) : Gun builder game, using a combination of chosen and random gliders, in as few time units as possible.



Gun shape



Glider - travelling North East, one square per 4 time units

Variable randomness (0-100%) to adjust playing difficulty.

Displaceable playing area: enables restriction of growth of an unwanted colony of cells by moving them to an edge or (better still) a corner.

"Unlike other versions of life where there hasn't been much to aim for, this Life has a purpose." November 1993 PCW Plus.

This review recommends playing MAIL232 LIFE before considering the If trying MAJL232 LIFE, note the following:

- If you normally define and use the function keys (11, 12, etc.), these must be undefined;
- The message "Requires RS232C / Centronics Interface" may be ignored - it works without this;
- MAIL232 LIFE runs much more slowly than our programs, because of its larger playing area;
- The article on MAIL232 LIFE which accompanies the review shows a "simple glider". This is actually an 'I' - not a glider.

FOR THOSE WHO HAVE NOT PREVIOUSLY PLAYED LIFE, WE RECOMMEND, AS AN ALTERNATIVE TO THE ABOVE, OUR GAME LIFE1 (only 50p).

THESE GAMES ARE NOW AVAILABLE IN 3" OR 3.5" FORMAT.

A DISK IS NOT SUPPLIED - send your own single or double density formatted disk. Second class postage rates in the UK are 19p up to 60g, 29p up to 100g.

COMPILED: £7.50 (disk supplied, 8000-series only) 30 OXO's, Game of L's, Prisoners' Dilemma.

Instruction leaflets to accompany all games are available free on request.



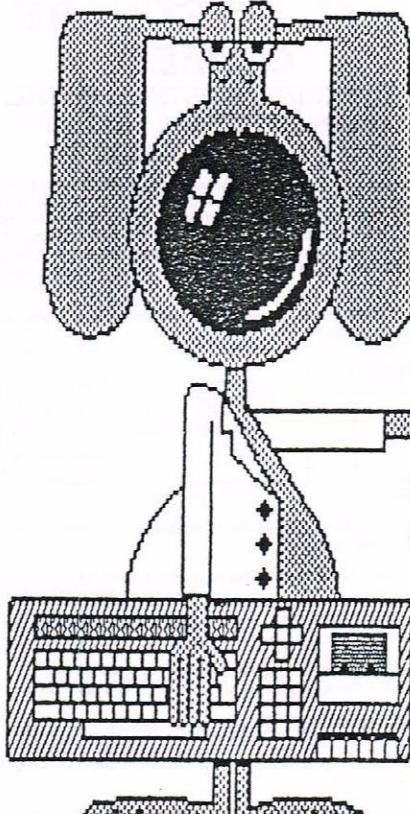
Computer Disk Problems?

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THE WORLDWIDE AMSTRAD CPC USERS CLUB

WACCI: THE INSIDE INFO

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The club, founded in 1986, is run on a non-profit making basis, by members for the benefit of members.

FOR A FREE SAMPLE COPY OF THE CLUB MAGAZINE SEND A 29p STAMP TO:

Paul Dwerryhouse, 7, Brunswood Green, Hawarden, Deeside, Clwyd CH5 3JA



WoW SOFTWARE ADVENTURES FOR THE 464 & 6128



NEW ADVENTURES

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FOR PETE'S SAKE (Two Parts) PCW, 6128 & 464	STEPHEN BOYD	DISC ONLY	£5					
+ Free Game - FRED'S NIGHTMARE								

ASCII and CP/M - Esperanto for Computers

The question most often asked by well-meaning relatives trying to buy a computer-related gift for present is, "Will it work on X's computer?" If X is you, you have an 8-bit computer, and the gift is a game or other program, I'm afraid the odds are against it.

Our hobby was blighted by the different media used by the makers in the early, development, years of home computing; tape, 3½" or 5¼" (or even 8") discs, cartridges: and even once *that* hurdle was surmounted there is no uniformity in the way program information is stored; a tape or disc for one machine was generally unreadable by another. Amstrad had three models of computer using 3" drives (CPC, PCW and Spectrum), but there is still incompatibility amongst its models, though a PCW can sometimes read a disc formatted by a CPC. Otherwise, there is no easy communication by tape or disc between any of the 3" disc computers, including the Spectrums. With a 5¼" drive hitched up you are on an even smaller island; 3½" is now *the* most widely-used drive size here. CPCs and early PCWs can add 3½" drives as a extra; later PCWs and PCWs come with 3½" drives fitted as standard equipment.

But there other ways computers can communicate. Conversion of a game or other program for another machine is outside the scope for this article, but the transfer of text is an easier matter. Most word processors can produce an ASCII file, which can be thought of as text without any special information stored with it to affect its appearance on screen or when it is sent to the printer, apart from spaces and carriage returns at the end of each line. As near to an international language as exists among computers.

Once text is in this form, the task of moving it becomes much simpler. A cable link, supported by software on each computer, is the easiest way, but using a modem with comms software and BT or Mercury, text can be passed around through phone lines, then be 'rebuilt' with accents and/or all the other machine-specific information once it arrives at its destination computer.

* * * * *

Another common link between 8-bit computers exists via the CP/M operating system, one of the longest-surviving relics of the history of computing. The reason it lasts is because its enthusiasts work to keep it alive, even thriving, with patches being designed to enable it to work with new format discs and the newer programs and accessories. It has grown with the computers that can still use it.

I am aware of versions for Amstrad CPCs and the PCW family, and recently read that there are versions for Tatung Einsteins and +3 Spectrums. The beauty of CP/M is that at heart the program is the same, with each version having an interface to configure the specific machine's variables, such as the screen size and keyboard.

The programs usually supplied with the system include directory readers with options, some quite sophisticated file copiers, utility programs to set protection on files or discs to lessen the chance of accidental erasure, as well as programs to format discs ready for data storage. Later versions allow the date-stamping of files and discs as a guide to remembering when you last worked on a file.

Not all CP/M programs (from utilities to games via almost everything else) can run on all computers, but many will. These days, virtually all CP/M programs are available at low cost through PD libraries so it need not cost you much to get into CP/M if you have, or can get, a version for your machine. *All* the editorial text in 8BIT MART is produced using a commercial program running under CP/M on an 8-bit computer. And that suits me fine.



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THE BEST PUBLIC DOMAIN FOR AMSTRAD CPC

by Tom Dean of IMPACT PD. Part 2 Games.

SPOTS by Julian Marek. This is a fun 1-4 player strategy game, where the aim is to capture the most territory on the playing area. This is done by moving one of your spots to a position on the board which turns all adjoining spots to your colour. Hard to explain, but great fun.

CRAZY SNAKE by Frabble and Duck. This game is to snake games what Arkanoid is to bat 'n' ball games - it's the number one! 20 levels of fast, frantic action collecting diamonds and bonuses and avoiding other snakes, bullet things, objects, etc.

BATTLE SPHERES by Malfunction of The Firm. This 'un is two player game, and the object is to wipe out the other player's base. Loads of obstacles and stuff, with 50 levels and a built-in level designer. Some PD libraries stock the 75 level version, which comes with another level set designed by me.

JUMPMANIA by Frabble of MOPS (shareware). I don't particularly like this game, but a lot of people do. You play a Smiley who bounces over 20 levels making all the blocks disappear (sort of like the bonus level of Maze Mania, but harder and with more obstacles) by jumping on them.

RC-QUEST by Jayssoft of MOPS (shareware). This is a puzzle game, where the object is to build a track so a car can get to the checkpoint. There are 25 levels and loads of brainwork is needed.

They are the best, but there are lots of other great/okay games I've missed out (It'd take too long to go through them all!) such as MOLECULAR 2, ALIEN ATTACK, AXYS (supposedly good, never seen it), ZAP 'T' BALLS (5 level PD version), PIPELINE, LES MINGS, etc. Most of these games can be obtained through any PD library. The discmag IMPACT gives a list of #%%& PD libraries as well as the good ones. See you in the next 8BIT MART!

AMSTRAD CPC FOR SALE - contd

programmer, new and used blank EPROMS, an RS232 interface, joysticks, a Dart Scanner, ABBA and third drive switches, FD1 drives, Multiface 2, Lightpen, RAM-ROM, Training System, Serious and games software, Amstrad Action cover-tapes, manuals, clip art, new 3" and 3½" discs, disc boxes, covers, and more. Phone for list. David 081 519 9423. REF:FBSZ

AMSTRAD CPC WANTED

WANTED: Protext wordprocessor in a recent version. It is to run on a PCW, but CP/M Protext as supplied for a CPC 6128 is the same. Please telephone: 0202 876807 if you can help. REF:F

WANTED FOR A CPC: Multiface II and inside help on getting tapes on to disc. Also an unbugged version of Mindtrap and help with programs. Contact: Mrs. Christine Raisin, 117, Tilbury Rise, Cinderhill, NOTTINGHAM, NOTTS NG8 6DE. 0602 765163. REF:C

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BOOKS WANTED: The Amstrad Disc Companion for the CPC 464, 664 and 6128 by Simon Williams. Published by Sigma press 1987. Also CP/M Plus Handbook: Operator's and Programmers's

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WANTED: The "Admiral Graf Spee" and "Seduction" for the CPC. Also 32k Ram card for Star LC24-20 printer. Dave Caleno, 29, Chapter Road, Strood, ROCHESTER, Kent. ME2 3PX (0634 724262 8.30-10.30pm) REF:F

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WANTED: COMMODORE FORMAT 40 (Jan 1994) in mint condition with/without covertape. Also Wanted - C64 cassettes in mint condition of: Jet Set Willy 1, Dictator by Dk'Tronics, Graham Souness International Soccer and Multimixx 5. Good prices paid. S Ross, 3, Deanbank Street, DUNDEE DD2 2EA REF:F

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continued.....

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* * * *

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WANTED OLD SPECCY STUFF. Does anyone have any Wafas, Interface Two Roms or any other interesting old Sinclair bits; (a 128k keypad? Multiface +3?, or even a ZX80 or flat screen TV??) Please write to: Eifion Bedford, 19, sea Road, ABERGELE, Clwyd LL22 7TE
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WANTED: Games for a Spectrum, Dragon, and Atari 2600; and cartridges for C64 console. Also a PSU, joystick and paddles for 2600; Dragon joysticks and Multiface 3 for a Spectrum. Telephone: 0532 671393.
REF:CUIP

WANTED FOR THE SPECTRUM: Any old platform and ladder games. Any Plus D owners who would like to share any information or discs. Write to: John Turner, 58, Burnside, PARBOLD, Lancs. WN8 7PE
REF:F

* * * *

THE NOTICEBOARD

I have had a special request from Spencer Wilson in Eire. He writes that he is having difficulty tracking down some CPC hardware and CPC versions of games he first got familiar with on a BBC. He has a CPC464, so tape versions are what he needs. I know at least some of the games are available for a CPC, so if you have one or more and are prepared to part with them perhaps you could contact him. The hardware

continued.....

EMULATORS or, I may look like a boring old PC...

An emulator is a program which enables one computer to act as if it were another. The extent to which it succeeds is largely dependant on the ability of the programmer and the memory available in the computer on which the emulation program is to be run. In some cases you may not be able to reproduce sound, for example, and key duplication may not be complete on the emulating computer. This may not be a big problem with a game but a word processor may require a period of re-familiarisation with some effects which were initiated by special keystroke combinations and may not work, or be changed, with the new set-up.

Let us assume, for instance, you have access to an IBM-compatible PC and want to run your 8-bit computer's programs on it, the steps to follow are as follows:

First, you will need to scour the small advertisement pages of PC Mart or Micro Mart for an emulator program to kid the PC that for a while it is a C64, Spectrum, or whatever you have. These are generally available for well under £10, or you may even find one free on a cover disc/CD of a PC magazine. Another source is one of the many PD and Shareware libraries. Drop me line if you cannot find the one you want and I'll try to help. Obviously, you will need the emulator on a disc size which the PC you will be using can read.

Second, the program you will want to run on the PC must be transferred to a disc which will fit the PC. This can be slightly more difficult because, even though the emulator disc will (should!) come with a conversion program, hitching up a non-standard drive to an 8-bit computer can be a bit tricky unless you buy a complete drive kit or know the pin connections of your disc drive socket. Incidentally, tape programs are out unless you can first put them on to a disc for conversion to the PC-usable format. Cartridge and other programs can be grabbed by some emulators, but check first if this is important to you.

Most PCs these days come with 3½" drives fitted and, as these are the standard upgrade for a computer originally fitted with a 3" drive, owners of PCWs, Spectrums and CPCs should not have too many problems if they have, or can fit, a 3½" drive. For simplicity, C64 users are better advised to stick to the 5¼" format throughout for the emulator disc, the PC drive and the program to be converted, if at all possible. I have experience of a couple of these emulator programs and the instructions which come with them are pretty straight forward. The original program is converted by stages to a file form which a PC can interpret on a PC-readable disc.

Now it must be admitted that this whole thing is largely a novelty, but if you find the thought of leaving Manic Miner or Protext on the shelf when you use a PC more than you can bear, the emulator is one way you can ease the pain.

So much for PCs. But that is not the end of the emulator saga. I have "ZXM" from Betasoft Software, and this is a Spectrum Emulator for the Amstrad CPC computers. Now don't get all excited and think that all Spectrum programs on tapes and discs can now be run on a CPC, they can't, but I have already been playing about with short typed-in programs in the Spectrum's BASIC and they work fine; the BEEP command is now an open book to me. I'll keep you updated through future 8BIT MARTs as I explore its full capabilities.

Incidentally, while researching this piece, I have been told there are 8-bit computer emulators available for C64s and Sam Coupés (which already comes with Spectrum emulation), though I have not further details to hand yet. Please let me know if you can help. Loading pictures and text created by one computer into another is another kind of emulation outside the scope of this article, but which 8BIT MART will cover, starting with this month's ASCII and CP/M article.

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JM SOFTWARE

The above company have sent me samples of their games discs for 8000 series PCWs. Initially, they are only available for these computers, but there is a possibility they can (and will) be adapted to run on other computers which can use the CP/M operating system. Further news when I have it.

From the advert elsewhere in this issue you will see these are very reasonably priced and I am very impressed with the instruction sheets and tutor versions which accompany the games. I wish all software suppliers were this diligent.

There are two versions of the LIFE game to be had from JM Software. The original LIFE is a PD game, involving the creation of apparently living cells which grow, move and die according to programmed rules. JM's versions have themselves been grown and developed and offer features not available in the original game. All very well documented with suggestions for some of the lifeform simulations and objectives you can go for with the shapes you set running.

On the compilation disc are a number of mentally challenging puzzles of which I particularly liked the Game of L's and Prisoners' Dilemma.

In the former you play against the computer, trying to place your L-shape and two dots in such a way as to block the computer as it tries to do the same to you; simple but effective. In the latter, two people take turns to play the computer, and rack up points by co-operating or defecting.

Once you've got the hang of these you can move on to three dimensional noughts and crosses in a 4x4x4 cube. I have played this and I found it quite tricky to think in three dimensions at once. Mind you, I'm a dead loss at Connect 4 as well.

You can contact JM Software Games at: 3, Parkside, Westhill, SKENE, Aberdeen AB32 6QL or telephone them at 01224 741305

TOTAL ACCOUNTING

Derek Rogers Professional Software produces a complete range of PCW accounting packages: Total Accounting, Total Pay and Total Tax; all serious packages at sensible prices, for those who need to get their sums right. Derek is also the author of The Essential Guide to Accounting, a book-on-disk to tell you what you need to know about the subject.

Total Accounting does everything an accounting system should - "That's why we called it Total," says Derek. "It was based on a product that needed a memory the size of Belgium and enough floppy disks to fill the Channel Tunnel, but we managed to cut it down and still make it do the right things." When Total Accounting first appeared, the Amstrad User Group said: "The list of features is astounding." Total Pay and Total Tax are equally comprehensive and Total Accounting has outlived some major PCW rivals. "Just before we appeared, one of our competitors described their product as Simply The Best," Derek says. "They don't any more."

Derek Rogers Professional Software are at 21 Hamilton Drive, Glasgow, G12 8DN. Tel. 0141-334 8902. Phone, or write for further details of any of their products if you have a PCW.

3" DRIVE BELTS

I have heard from Mr R Fields at Computer Bits, 95b, Cavendish Place, EASTBOURNE, Sussex BN21 3TZ, that he has commissioned a manufacturing run of drive belts for all 3" disc drives. This is to prevent whole computers or drive units being scrapped for the want of a broken or (stretched) belt.

Having nearly lost one of my computers for this very reason, I particularly appreciate his efforts. If you feel it would be worthwhile having a couple of spares on hand before problems arise, give them a ring at 01323 646660. Be ready to say what sort of computer you have. Even if you use one regular repair shop, this sort of part may not be available through usual trade sources in the future so 'be prepared.'

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"Absolutely brilliant." - Russell Charles, Capital Management, Cardiff



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A new utility package enabling you to design and print super-looking Labels and Letterheads on PCW or Epson-compatible printers.

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This program allows you to design, edit, store and print text-based labels. The main features are:-

- Simple 'on-screen' label editing.
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- Design your own customised printer drivers with single-letter codes for each effect eg. A, B, C.
- Matrix/Daisy/Star drivers on disc.
- Variable line spacing > labels.
- Locate labels by data search.
- Print multiple copies of labels.
- Build your own library of labels.
- Auto-numbering for ticketing etc.
- Fully menu-driven for easy use.
- Simple printer port selection.

PICTURE LABELLER

This is the program for those users wishing to add graphics to their label designs. The program is again menu-driven with the following main options:-

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- Ideal for producing economy business cards/compliment slips, personalised greetings and club membership cards, house produce labels and many other designs.
- Not Suitable for PCW 9512/+ with Daisy Wheel printers only.

Labelle Uses

- Computer Disc Contents.
- Home Videos/Cassettes.
- Stock/Pricing Labels.
- Personalised Letterheads.
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3" DISCS The story so far

With 3" discs being less easily available, I thought I would have a ring around the various advertising suppliers to see where the current stock is and what the future holds. My first phone call introduced me to a quick resumé of The Story So Far. I should preface the piece by saying that the facts below are as I understand things from informants. Any additional information would be most welcome.

In 1988, Amstrad commissioned 40 million 3" discs from Matsushita in Japan to service the PCW and CPC computers for their expected life. These were to be sold branded as Maxell or Amstrad's own label, Amsoft. The cases of both were black and marked with a small rectangular pattern and "Made in Japan".

Other producers came into what was then still a fairly buoyant market, among them the producers of the "circles in squares" - marked cases. These came in blue, red and yellow as well as black and in my experience were generally dodgy in the extreme. Mine did not actually fall apart, but read errors were common and one informant said that, using a disc editor, he could read information from the back of the disc as they were so thin!

There are also some smooth-sided discs in circulation. Especially if these are printed with a serial number (usually in white), with or without 'Made in Japan', they are generally very sound and can be recommended.

About a year ago, Maxell dropped out of supplying 3" discs, and this was followed by Amsoft. The demise of the Spectrum, the relatively poor sales of the CPC Plus series and the CPC's (original and Plus) ability to take add-on 3½" drives, coupled with the PCWs' switch to 3½" drives as original equipment did not seem to warrant another production run.

Discs continued to be available as shops maintained stocks as best they could through wholesalers. Also the software houses found the market for full-price programs cooled so started selling off their surplus stocks. A year ago, I found an advertisement in

Market Trader magazine for Spectrum, CPC, and PCW games on disc at 25p and 50p each. Mind you, you had to buy in 'trade' quantities.

This ex-software house route of supply still survives, if rather erratically, but of course scarcity has driven prices a little higher. The quality is generally very good, as long as you don't get a company's 'customer returns', and you will occasionally find a good usable game or other program on the disc. Remember that, if you really only want blank discs, a 3" disc with a program for one computer can be reformatted to suit another. So check Spectrum, CPC and PCW bins if you have a shop with old 8-bit stock near you.

Then, in February 1994, a new supply of 20,000 was commissioned from a manufacturer in Italy and, at the same time, another lot turned up and went through a large wholesaler, the remainder were apparently fitted with labels similar to those of Amsoft. Unfortunately, the quality standards did not meet the usual specification and there is a fairly high fail rate.

In some cases the hub and magnetic disc come apart (the glue melts) and I am also told if you are unlucky, some sectors will not accept formatting. If you are very desperate, these discs can be botched (Dave the disk doctor will hate this!) by applying a tiny drop of superglue on each side of the disc where the hub meets the brown magnetic area. There are PD programs available to put a special 'lock-out' file over the damaged sector(s) to leave the rest of each side useable.

This more or less brings us to the present. I understand that a supply of new 3" discs to much higher standards is imminent through Total Computing, and I suggest you contact Simon Caspell (Tel: 0202 717001, or see his advert elsewhere) to find out the latest on that situation. In the meantime I suggest you check out the adverts in 8BIT Mart and elsewhere, and make sure you phone about their availability before ordering.

Other things to remember are that the more 3" discs you can order, the cheaper the discs will be, and if you belong to a user group there are usually further savings to be made.

THE LAWYERS' PCW CLUB... wishes all a joyful Christmas and New Year.

TEMPLATE.STD: Every letter I write begins the same way. Its margins are set to 1½" from the left, and 1" from the right. Its tabulators are set at standard positions. It begins by stating my address and telephone number. Wouldn't it be good if the computer did this automatically, so that whenever I create a new document everything was set out already for me?

By now, you have guessed that this can be done easily; and of course that I already do it! Locoscript does it best, and this article will explain how, but you can do the same with some other wordprocessors (by making an empty file with just the layout etc. you need, editing a copy of this file and saving your letter under an amended name).

In each group of a PCW disc, one file can be named "TEMPLATE.STD". You create this file if there is none by moving into the group, pressing C (for Create), typing in TEMPLATE.STD as the filename, and pressing [ENTER]. You then set out the file exactly as you need it - margins, tabs, justification, text, typestyles, paper type and press [EXIT][ENTER] to save it.

When you next create a file in the same group where your TEMPLATE.STD ("template") is, you will find that it includes all the features in the template. Yet whatever you type into your newly created file, and whatever alterations you make to it, your template remains intact for future use.

Of course, your template may need changing in the future. Simply move over it, press E (for Edit), then [ENTER], and you can alter it like any other file. Press [EXIT][ENTER] to return to the disc management screen.

A few tips to do with templates, which may prove invaluable:-

PCW Dating. The PCW doesn't store the correct date, but you can make it do so. At start of each day, Edit your template (as described above), and type in today's date in the appropriate place. Each letter you create during the day will be correctly dated.

Christmas Holidays. If you Edit your template and type in the details of Christmas and New Year closing (or any other relevant - or irrelevant - information), it will appear on your letter. See footers below.

Footers. You can have information inserted at the foot of each page, by typing it into the footer zone of your template - this is a little complex, but there are instructions in your manual.

M: Drive and Start of Day (PCW). When you start up the computer, certain files are copied across to your M: drive. The M: drive is an imaginary disc in the computer's memory, which works faster than an ordinary disc drive but which is wiped clear when the computer is reset or switched off. Any files called TEMPLATE.STD on your start of day disc will be copied across - if you want to alter these files, Edit the files ON YOUR DISC - if you edit them in the M: drive, changes will be lost when you switch off.

Amending Notepaper. The TEMPLATE.STD techniques could be used to amend/make notepaper.

Locomail Fill. If you like templates and have Locomail, you can have an unlimited number of any name, simply by Filling rather than Creating.

Club Enquiries to: Keith Simons, 10 Orrishmere Road, Cheadle Hulme, Cheadle, Cheshire. SK8 5HP.

WEIRD WIRED WORLD

I was interested to get a call last week from somebody suggesting how the recent alleged breach of BT security (and giving out very secret telephone numbers) may have occurred. The press was full of purple prose; how multi-layer hacking resulted in eventual success for a pale-skinned, hollow-eyed, (you get the picture?) computer outlaw surfing on the Global Information Superhighway (anyone can do this stuff). It was repeatedly suggested that, at last, this Mitnick acquired his 'happy family' of passwords and the full secure BT directory was open, and his to survey at leisure.

Now, it may be that this is not how the alleged breach did take place. What if one somebody working within BT with another somebody, who in turn was responsible for maintaining part of the system, asked how such deep access was achieved? And suppose the other somebody said "Sure!" and just did it, bypassing the the whole password system at the front end and provided a ream of printouts to prove it.

The effect would be the same, if this version of the story is true - a breach of security would still have occurred. The difference is that in journalistic terms, instead of the rattling good high-tech story, what they would have to write about is a couple of 'lads'; one a cheap crook prepared to flog the printout to a paper to establish a reputation for himself as a 'Net-head, and the other an indiscreet and stupid jerk who shouldn't be trusted with the Christmas party fund.

So our 'cyberpunk' might have nothing more high-tech at home than a hand-held games console or an 8-bit computer.... All this supposes that there was some kind of security breach and that, at the time of writing, remains to be proved.

COMMODORE MAGIC

I am pleased to publicise Commodore Magic, a group dedicated to supporting the Commodore C64 and its users. It offers a wide range of services free, or at low cost, for discerning C64 owners designed to make life easier, and more fun, too!

Just some of the services are: (1) a low-cost 'mix and match' PD library, (2) a comprehensive technical service which, among other things, offers to answer questions and attempts to fix program bugs, (3) a contact service to put owners in touch, (4) a game-help service covering various pokes, cheats and other game tips, (5) classified advertisements in the magazine at very reasonable prices for small companies, (6) members' advertisements - same as 5 but for members to publicise their wants and offers, and (7) the monthly newsletter which is virtually free and includes contributions from the Commodore Magic group's membership.

Commodore Magic has a free information pack which gives full details of the services, most of which are completely free. This can be obtained from Martin Haywood, 5, Crane Avenue, Yaxley, PETERBOROUGH, Cambs PE7 3JH. He would appreciate it if you send two 1st class stamps and a return address label to help offset costs.

COMMODORE MAGIC

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5 Crane Avenue, Yaxley, Peterborough, Cambridgeshire, PE7 3JH
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THESE YOU HAVE LOVED...Part 1

Some computer games still stand as classics of their type; stirring a memory and even perhaps bringing a drop of moisture to the eye of a long-term user. Arguably the first such classic was PONG, so for those of you too young to recall this landmark in gaming, let me tell you of its significance to our hobby.

Games machines in amusement parks and arcades, whether for fun or profit, have a long history. Along the way came pinball, race games, prize-grabber cranes and so on and, as progress allowed, their mechanical operation was augmented by the use of electricity. The obvious eye-catching benefits of advertising the pleasures to be had from a game with lights and a moving feature were incorporated to good effect.

In the 1950s there was a game, called Tail Gunner I believe, which projected WW2 film footage into a cabinet. Standing on tiptoe I could just turn the gun to move the gunsight across the screen and blast the Luftwaffe out of the sky. My bloody score was recorded by the machine so I could prove to my parents that, should the Hun rise again, I would be ready. I recently found a very similar version of this game in an arcade but without the film footage to use as the target area. I must say that although it may be more politically correct, it's nowhere near as much fun.

Then along came PONG - the first TV game and it showed! The concept was like squash stripped to the essentials. One player moved a bat up and down one edge of the court to stop and return a ball - miss it and you've lost a life. Looking back, the amazing thing was that we accepted it, we believed in it. There really was no bat, it was a line of light on a cathode ray screen, and the "ball" was a square of light. We played the real game with real bat and balls in our imaginations and made the mental leap to accept the illusion to an extent we had not done before. This was the difference; a step away from tangible reality but as real as the TV news.

Some of the basic elements of video and computer gaming were tested and developed in the early versions of PONG, and each was sought out and played with enthusiasm by the early video junkies. In time, the one-player, squash, version led to two-player, tennis, options, and later to two bats at each end and scoring up to 11, 13 or 15. The angle of the ball's ricochet after striking the bats at different points along their surface varied, and the speed of the ball's return increased.

Something that impressed me was the speed with which these improvements to the gameplay appeared in the arcades. And not just arcades. Pubs and cafés got glass-topped games tables with monitors mounted underneath so you could play while you waited for your drink to cool down (or warm up.) I suppose they were waterproof?

Thus the British pub, for years a bastion of cards, draughts, skittles, dominoes, and shove ha'penny, took in another electronic intrusion to join the jukebox, and some of us welcomed it with enthusiasm.

All the fundamental elements for computer action gameplay were there in PONG, albeit in a rudimentary form, from collision detection through score incrementing to the possibility of team play. The simplicity of the concept meant anyone had a chance of winning a round or two, if not the whole game. Incidentally, colour was simulated by bands of tint across the monochrome screen, a technique used when the first hand-held games started to hit the shops years later and still found in arcades today on their older cabinet machines, usually near the back wall!

This is where Arkanoid and Impact started, and if you've ever typed in short programs in BASIC or machine code, I would bet that a version of PONG was one of the programs. And I would also bet that when you found that it worked you couldn't resist playing the game for a while. Another case of the addictive powers of PONG!